Permanent Mission of the Republic of Indonesia to the United Nations

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NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016

TL 1985-6

STATEMENT BY

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BEFORE THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES ON THE " QUESTION OF EAST TIMOR "

NEW YORK, 14 AUGUST 1987

Mr. Chairman,

You will, I hope, allow me to record once again my Delegation's principled objection to the consideration of this item by the Special Committee. Indonesia's position is well-known : we are firmly opposed to the discussion of the political and constitutional status of East Timor by this or any other international forum. Decolonization having been consummated in East Timor a decade ago and its people having chosen independence through integration with the Republic of Indonesia, such a discussion would clearly constitute interference in matters essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of a member-state. By the same token, we are consistently opposed to the granting of hearings to so-called petitioners on this question, for as the record of previous sessions of the Committee has shown, and as was the case again yesterday, their "testimony", far from serving any useful purpose, has never risen above the now all-too-familiar litany of malicious misrepresentations, slanderous insinuations and down - right fabrications.

This annual charade has by now become as much an encumbrance as an anomaly in the proceedings of this Committee. Hence, it is a source of unceasing wonderment to us that, having been exposed, time and again, as purveyors of patently false information and often ludicrous claims, devoid of any sense of reality or responsibility, these petitioners and the pseudo-humanitarian organisations they represent can still maintain their credibility with some delegations.

Mr. Chairman,

In the course of yesterday's meeting, the Committee was again subjected to an excessive re-hash of spurious allegations, distortions and disinformation on the situation in East Timor, despite the detailed and documented facts to the contrary which we have presented to this Committee and other forums in the past. We regret the fact that there seems to be no way for this Committee to avoid such a pointless, repetitious exercise and my Delegation, on its part, certainly does not

wish to be drawn into making repetitive statements in return. It was only last year that in our statement we presented the Committee with a comprehensive, factual account of the process of decolonization in East Timor and Indonesia's role in it; of how that process was sabotaged by Fretilin and miserably botched by the former colonial authority; and of the true state of affairs in East Timor today with regard to such aspects as human rights, political and economic developments and religious and cultural freedoms. That statement of my Delegation last year has lost nothing of its actuality and validity. Thus, in order not to impose on the valuable time of this Committee and to avoid covering the same ground again, we have circulated copies of that statement to member-delegations.

Mr. Chairman,

Another seemingly incurable trait afflicting Indonesia's detractors when trying to black-paint the prevailing situation in East Timor has been their incredible capacity for exaggeration. Indeed, if their allegations contained even an ounce of truth, one would have to conclude that East Timor today is a famine-stricken land, convulsed in unceasing warfare and large-scale military operations, where the people are being continually subjected to gross violations of human rights, with disease, death and destruction their daily lot. It requires a truly fertile imagination, especially for those who have never set foot on the island, to be able to paint such a picture, which is so totally divorced from reality.

At last year's session, for example, when one speaker claimed the presence of 300.000 Indonesia troops in East Timor, my Delegation felt constrained to point out that even the total combined strength of Indonesia's armed forces, which includes the army, navy, air force and police and comprises both combat units and administrative personnel was well below 300.000, and that they are spread over the 6000 inhabited islands of the 27 provinces of the country. We thought that this reminder would have sufficed to put a stop to such capriciousness, but it appears

that so-called Fretilin spokesmen took this figure seriously and, not to be out-done, they now claim that Indonesia has "suffered up to 20.000 casualties since 1976". We regret to note that this gem of disinformation has even found its way into the Secretariat's working paper (doc. A/AC. 109/919, para 20), for we would have expected greater care and scrutiny on the part of the Secretariat in selecting material for such a report. Be that as it may, all that I would like to say on this point is that if Fretilin were indeed capable of inflicting 20.000 casualties on the Indonesian Army, they should by now not only control East Timor but would pose a formidable threat to the entire Republic of Indonesia.

The reality is that whatever security desturbances which may have occurred have been at a low level. This is also the conclusion of all reputable sources and unbiased observers. This confirms what we have stated all along, namely, that quite contrary to the glowing reports of Fretilin exploits in battle that occasionally surface in the Western press, planted through the same pro-Fretilin correspondents, the Fretilin has since long been reduced to a band of stragglers, engaged in common robberies and banditry. Also, their numbers continue to steadily diminish and this year again more than fifty ex-Fretilin surrendered. Under the terms of the Presidential Amnesty which remains in force, they were allowed to settle peacefully in the local communities of their choice.

In this regard, it may also be pertinent to cite the observations made by Mr. Hastings, who has been to East Timor on several occasions, and who has hardly been uncritical of Indonesia in the past. In his article "East Timor's War of Facts and Figures", published in the "Sidney Morning Herald" on 20 April 1987, he questioned the credibility of such numbers, and I quote :

> *"In East Timor, US Catholic Relief would be surprised to learn that 15,000 - 30,000 Indonesian troops are battling 2,500 Fretilin guerrillas in East Timor*

or that 250,000 Timorese have died in the last 11 years or that the Indonesians plan a mass sterilisation programme.

The International Red Cross, very active in the island, has never reported such figures, nor has UNICEF, which has a major Australian funded programme in East Timor ..... deliberate exaggeration doesn't help us. Did 250,000 die ? I never met a more anti-Indonesian Timorean than Dili's previous Apostolic Administrator, Monsignor da Costa Lopes. Even he - a priest of whom the Apostolic Nuncio in Jakarta said more in sorrow than in anger : "The monsignor is a good man who must add a zero to all figures attracting his attention" - rejected estimates of more than 100,000 mainly from famine and famine - related disease.

Late last year, three foreign journalists visited East Timor, Mr. Bill Tarrant, Mr. Ghafur Fadyl and Yang Razali Kassim, representing Reuters, the Associated Press and "The Straits Times" of Singapore, respectively.

As to the security situation in the province the dispatches of the correspondent of The Straits Times are characteristic of the findings of all three journalists. In his article which appeared on September 20, 1986 he wrote, inter alia, the following :

"For a place said to have been shadowed by a 10 year old security problem posed by the independence-seeking Fretilin, it certainly doesn't have the air of tension one would have imagined. Even outside Dili, in places like Baucau, Liquica, Viqueque or Illomar, the settled communities suggest a measure of peace for the past several years. So Governor Mario Viegas Carrascalao was not exaggerating when he said to the three journalists who called on him : 'The situation is practically normal'. For Indonesia, however, the real issue in Timor is not security but development".

Mr. Kassim further noted :

"For a province which is generally thought to be pretty closed up, East Timor seems to be very open. How can a place be described as closed if it has been trading with the outside world ? Checks with official sources confirmed that East Timor indeed has been having a robust trade, exporting as well as importing vigourously in recent years... Perhaps reflecting the expanding needs of a growing economy and a settled community, the volume of East Timor imports .... has been climbing steeply ... As East Timor's development pace goes on higher gear, so does its needs ... If there is any significance in all these figures it is that they testify to East Timor's quickly normalising situation. They also indicate the success in efforts to introduce a diversified economy which is not just based on agriculture but also trade and commerce."

Mr. Chairman,

As to the allegations of human rights violations, we have again heard the same well-worn accusations and claims of tortures, detentions, wholesale destruction, massacres and even genocide.

Having previously responded in considerable detail in this Committee, as well as in other forums, my delegation has no intention of again going into a lengthy rebuttal. I should simply like to recall that since the Forty-First Session of the Commission on Human Rights in 1985, practically the same accusations were made by the same non-governmental organizations. As is known, after having considered the replies and comments given by the representative of Indonesia on that occasion, the Commission decided not to pursue consideration of the human rights situation in East Timor in closed session. Subsequently, successive sessions of the Sub Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities also refused to entertain communications containing the same fabricated charges we have heard yesterday.

My delegation finds it deplorable that the petitioners have persistently disregarded those decisions and instead have again engaged themselves in a smear campaign of baseless allegations. By ignoring the Indonesian Government's submissions to and statements before the Commission on Human Rights as well as other available evidence and objective reports and by showing such obvious political motivation and bias, the petitioners have in fact put their own credibility and that of the organizations they represent in grave doubt - a situation which can only be to the detriment of other organizations genuinely dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights.

By the way, Mr. Chairman, when Portuguese and other western petitioners accuse us of violating the cultural identity of the East Timorese people and even use such a term as cultural genocide, it can not but prompt us to ask the following questions : What is the cultural identity of the East Timorese people ? Is it different from that of their kith and kin across an artificial colonial boundary on the western part of the same island ; who speak the same language and dialects, observe the same customs and traditions and profess the same religion ? Or is it being suggested that the East Timorese cultural identity is synonymous to and rooted in the Portuguese cultural identity and language ? If so, are we then to justify and accept cultural imperialism as an unavoidable residue of past colonial bondage, and as something for which Indonesia can be held accountable if it failed to preserve it ?

No, Mr. Chairman, the true and authentic culture of the East Timorese people is alive and flourishing and, as I have only last year explained to the Committee, not only is that ethnic and cultural heritage being preserved, it is actively being promoted, through governmental support as well as spontaneous people's initiatives, through regional as well as nation-wide programs and projects.

Mr. Chairman,

As the periodic progress reports of the ICRC, which are open and accessible to everyone clearly show, the humanitarian situation in East Timor, far from remaining static or deteriorating as the petitioners would have us believe, has steadily improved over the years and will certainly continue to do so.

For example, as regards the temporary resettlement programme on Atauroa Island, on 9 February 1987, a last batch of 429 people or 145 heads of family have been returned from Atauro Island to their villages of origin in Viqueque District. This followed the earlier return of 234 people in November 1986, also to Viqueque District. With this last batch of returnees to their villages of origin, the Atauro settlement programme has been now completed and the facility has been closed as of 9 February 1987.

A number of temporary settlers on Atauro, however, numbering 202 persons or 59 heads of family have decided to permanently settle on the island. Their decision to do so was made of their own accord and they retain the right to return to the main island at any time. They enjoy the same rights and liberties as all other citizens of the province. Furthermore, a regular ferry service has been established between Dili and Atauro as an additional means to stimulate the economic development of the island.

In addition to these returnees from Atauro island, persons who had been temporarily displaced residing in the Ailiu and Bobonaro Districts have now also been returned to their places of origin in the Districts of Baucau, Los Palos, Viqueque, Same and Dili.

In this regard, from 10 to 18 February 1987 the ICRC visited previously displaced persons who had returned to their villages of origin on the main island from 1982 to 1984. The ICRC team visited 1,800 returnees residing in 40 villages located in 2 sub-districts of Los Palos District and 5 sub-districts of Baucau District. The ICRC has total freedom to conduct private interviews and group discussions

with the returnees. Following the visits, the ICRC representatives indicated that they found that the returnees lived freely, did not experience any discrimination and had been fully reintegrated into society.

Mr. Chairman,

The question of "disappearances" has again been raised by several petitioners, alluding to "thousands" of such alleged disappearances and suggesting that the Indonesian Government has consistently refused to investigate the cases or to cooperate on this matter. Let me set the record straight on this question too.

It is the policy of the Indonesian Government, in line with its State philosophy and its Constitutional obligations, to cooperate with other countries as well as with credible humanitarian organizations in the pursuit of genuine humanitarian objectives and the resolution of human rights problems. This certainly includes cases of alleged missing persons. As a manifestation of such a policy, the Indonesian Government has always cooperated with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances of the Commission of Human Rights in Geneva and in 1983 an Understanding was worked out with the Chairman of that Working Group and the ICRC on how to deal effectively with the question of alleged missing persons in East Timor. This Understanding is essentially designed to meet the genuine humanitarian concerns of especially the relatives of alleged missing persons seeking information on the whereabouts of family members. This approach was felt to be the correct one, as in the past certain groups and organizations have frequently sought to manipulate this issue for blatantly political purposes by raising unsubstantiated and often highly exaggerated allegations. Under the terms of this Understanding, the joint efforts of the ICRC and the Government of Indonesia have functioned well and have produced tangible results. In the coming months we hope to be able to provide further concrete information to the Commission on Human Rights on this matter.

Having explained this, Mr. Chairman, I consider it important and pertinent to reemphasise, however, that the Government of Indonesia cannot be held responsible for alleged missing persons, as the tragedy suffered by the East Timorese people after 1974, especially during the 1975 civil war and the reign of terror unleashed by Fretilin, was not of its making. Furthermore, during the upheaval thousands of East Timorese refugees fled to West Timor, where many remained as permanent residents, while others moved to other parts of Indonesia. Still others, subsequently returned to East Timor or emigrated to Australia, Portugal and elsewhere. In addition, there is the problem of similarity of names and of individuals changing names, due to marriage or for other reasons. As a result, the task of dealing with the question of the alleged missing persons has been rendered extremely difficult. And, I should like to add, hurling irresponsible and unfounded accusations towards Indonesia will certainly not contribute to the solution of this vexing problem.

It may also be instructive, Mr. Chairman, to share with this Committee some quotes from two responsible politicians of countries which are known to keep a close watch on the human rights situation in various countries.

On February 17 of this year, in the course of a parliamentary debate and in response to questions from the floor, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs of Canada was quoted as follows :

> *"There have been representations made by Canada to the Government of Indonesia. I have made them myself. There have been visits to East Timor by representatives of the Government of Canada. I would invite the Hon. Member rather than relying upon the editorial opinion of the Globe and Mail, to learn the facts for himself and to avoid making accusations which he cannot support with facts...."*

To another question, the Canadian Secretary of State replied :

"[The Hon. Member] made reference to the question of massive violations of human rights and asked if I were satisfied that those were not occurring. I am satisfied that there are no massive violations of human rights."

As reported by Reuters, during a press conference held in Jakarta on August 22, 1986 The Honourable Richard Lugar, member of the United States Senate, stated the following with regard to East Timor :

"I am impressed by the sensitivity and the progress for those who live in that part of this country, and the openness to international observers, particularly the ICRC. The U.S. has long been hopeful that kind of access can be consistent policy and it has been. I will carry back to my colleagues a good deal of information which I think many perhaps have not heard about".

Mr. Chairman,

One petitioner, nota bene a Dutchman, had the gall to say that we have not learned anything from the history of colonization. I would like to assure him that, on the contrary, we have learned quite a lot from it. For example, we have learned to distinguish quite clearly between genuine nationalists, genuine liberation movements and independence fighters and those who only assume revolutionary sounding labels but in reality are nothing but colonial collaborators in disguise, who have never opposed their colonial masters, let alone fight against them, who indeed were created and even armed by their colonial masters, and who up till this very day operate from and find safe haven in the territory of the ex-metropolitan power. Yes, Mr. Chairman, we have learned quite a lot about the many guises of neo-colonialist manipulation, our own experiences in the struggle for independence abound with such examples. And I would suggest that a petitioner from a country that up till this day harbours such organizations as "Door de eeuwen trouw" (or in English translation : "loyal through the ages") is the last person to teach us about colonial history.

Mr. Chairman,

Several speakers this morning, particularly the Permanent Representative of Mozambique, have seen fit to comment in disparaging terms about the recent elections in Indonesia. While on our part, I prefer to ignore the total inappropriateness of some governmental delegations to thus comment on the internal affairs of a member-state and resist the temptation to respond, let me on this subject simply refer to our letter in document A/42/379, dated 2 July 1987, which contains a comprehensive response to many of the misguided views raised by those speakers I really do not believe, Mr. Chairman, that I could or should add to what is already elaborated in that document. And I would urge those speakers to read that document carefully so that they may begin to understand the political processes in a nation that truly endeavours to be democratic without having to be dependent or subservient to other political systems and ideologies.

Mr. Chairman,

As during previous sessions, my delegation would have liked at this juncture to bring the Committee up-to-date on the progress being made in the development efforts to improve the living standard of the people, an area of apparently little interest to the petitioners, but of paramount importance to the general welfare and well-being of the East Timorese themselves. Aware, however of the constraints of time, I shall not go into any elaboration of the encouraging achievements that have been made and continue to be made in the key sectors of education, health, communications, agriculture, trade and industry.

We have noted that several petitioners have tried to dismiss the dramatic social and economic progress that has been recorded in the province in the most cynical and sinister terms. To that line of argumentation I would simply say that no objective or rational observer can be made to believe that such progress as has been attained in East Timor in a relatively short time could be possible without a

commensurate degree of political tranquility and normalcy and without the commitment and participation of the people themselves.

Other speakers again idulged in drawing preposterous parallels with Namibia and the Israeli occupied Arab territories. On this score Mr. Chairman, Indonesia's firm and uncompromising stand and policies are a matter of record in the world; and indeed that position can withstand any comparison with those of many other states including those in the very forefront of the anti-colonial struggle against South Africa and Israel. So, I do not really feel any compulsion to respond to such desperate and ridiculous references.

What all of this unmistakably indicates, is what my delegation has been stating before this Committee for some time now : that what the overwhelming majority of the East Timor people really desire is to rapidly develop their province in peace and freedom, so as to give concrete substance to their newly-won independence. Isn't it time for those who profess to have the fundamental interests of the East Timor people at heart to respect and support this genuine aspiration ?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.